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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
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21st meeting
2 February 1995

STATUS OF REPLIES TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S INVITATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN OBSERVANCE OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Note by the Secretariat

1. In paragraph 4 of resolution 48/215 B of 26 May 1994, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its forty-ninth session on the replies received regarding attendance at the special commemorative meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, in order to enable the Assembly at that session to recommend to the Assembly at its fiftieth session a precise timetable and agenda for the commemorative meeting and a suggested timetable for the conduct of the general debate of the fiftieth session. The present paper is submitted in pursuance of that request.

2. As of 27 January 1995, 69 heads of State or Government have indicated their intention to attend and to address the commemorative meeting; two Member States and one Observer State have indicated that they would send a high-level delegation.

3. In paragraph 1 of resolution 48/215 B, the General Assembly decided that the commemorative meeting would be held from Sunday, 22 October, to Tuesday, 24 October. The preliminary programme that accompanied the Secretary-General's invitations indicates that five meetings are allotted for speakers and that an interfaith service is being planned for the morning of Sunday, 22 October.

4. At the fortieth session, out of 159 Member States, 120 heads of State or Government or special envoys participated in the commemoration (12 meetings).

5. In paragraph 2 (a) of resolution 48/215 B, the General Assembly decided that all heads of delegations to the commemorative meeting would be afforded the opportunity to address it. It should be noted that it would require at least 21 hours to exhaust the list of 185 potential speakers if speeches are limited to five minutes, allowing an additional two minutes to permit speakers to walk from their seats in the Hall to the rostrum and back to their seats. Establishing time-limits for speeches is thus imperative.

6. With regard to the organization of the list of speakers, the Preparatory Committee may want to consider the possibility that the Secretariat would proceed in accordance with the practice followed in respect of the general debate. Alternatively, the Committee may want to consider other options, such as:

(a) The list of speakers to be opened on a certain date for inscription and the order be determined strictly in the order in which the delegation inscribed in the list;

(b) The list of speakers to be organized alphabetically, i.e., in accordance with the seating arrangement in the Hall;

(c) Drawing by lot (on the understanding that heads of State would take precedence at a given meeting, followed by heads of Government).

7. Observers would participate in accordance with the established practice of the General Assembly.

8. In order to comply with a time-limit, speeches should concentrate on the subject at hand, which is the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary, and avoid as far as possible touching on questions already addressed during the general debate only a few weeks before. The general debate would thus have to take place earlier, at its usual time.

9. Therefore, the Preparatory Committee may need to take decisions on the following matters:

(a) The need for extended meetings until the list of speakers for a given day is exhausted;

(b) A limitation of speaking time in view of the number of potential speakers;

(c) The Organization of the speakers' list;

(d) The relationship between the general debate and the commemorative meeting.